(b) whether it is also a fact that there are hurdles in achieving the target of 33 per cent tree cover by 2012; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) No Sir. As per the State of Forest Report, 2003 (SFR, 2003), biennial report published by Forest Survey of India, the real decrease in dense forest cover is assessed to be 4,605 Sq. km. only, whereas the decrease to the extent of 21,640 Sq. km. is due to interpretational corrections mostly in 1 to 25 ha. patches outside the recorded forests such as crops like cotton, sugarcane etc. which give reflectance similar to that of forest cover. But, at the same time, the open forest cover has increased by 29,040 Sq. Km. over the previous assessment of SFR, 2001.

(b) and (c) As per the State of Forest Report, 2003 the forest and tree cover of the country is 23.68% of its total geographical area wherein the assessment of new plantations of 5 to 10 years have not figured as they can not be captured through Satellite images. To achieve the target of 33 per cent of the forest cover by 2012, non-forest areas are to be covered under forest and tree cover with the help of State Forest Departments, different Ministries, Voluntary agencies, Community based organizations and Public-Private Partnerships. This requires an additional financial resource mobilization.

Pollution in metro cities

1313. SHRI RAJU PARMAR: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that due to industrialization and increase in vehicles, air in metropolitan cities has become polluted and poisonous;

(b) if so, the average level of pollution in the metro cities during the last three months; and

(c) the effective steps Government propose to take to protect the population from any calamity in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) and (b) Enhanced

industrialization and vehicular emissions are sources of air pollution. As per the embient air quality monitoring carried out by the Central Pollution Control Board and State Pollution Control Boards under the National Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Programme at various locations, including metro cities, the average levels during the last three months indicate that Sulphur dioxide and Nitrogen dioxide are within the National Ambient Air Quality Standards, whereas, Respirable Suspended Particulate Matter levels exceed the standards in many cities.

(c) The steps taken to abate air pollution include:

* Notification of general and source specific environmental standards;
* Identification of sources of pollution;
* Enforcement of auto exhaust emission standards for vehicles at manufacturing stage;
* Introduction of cleaner fuels and improved vehicular technologies;
* Use of beneficiated coal in thermal power plants; and
* Regular monitoring for environmental compliance.

Poachaing of wild animal

†1314. DR. CHHATTARAPAL SINGH LODHA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have received many complaints about poaching of wild animals recently;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the action taken against poachers by Government;

(d) whether it is also a fact that employees of the Department of Forest are also responsible for poaching; and

(e) if so, the action taken against such employees?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) and (b) Protection

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.